

REMARKS

The Office Action dated January 9, 2004 and the Advisory Action dated March 24, 2004, have been received and carefully noted. The above amendments to the claims, the following remarks and the included Request for Continued Examination, are submitted as a full and complete response thereto. Applicants respectfully note that no new matter has been entered through the above amendments. Claim 1 has been amended to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter of the invention. Support for the changes to claim 1 may be found in the present application at pages 99-108. Claims 1-6 are pending in the above-cited application and are respectfully submitted for consideration.

Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for extending the courtesy of an interview to discuss the above-cited application on April 6, 2004. The discussions were helpful and were used in formulating the instant Response.

Claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a) as being anticipated by *Muller et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 5,909,686 or *Muller '686*). Claims 3-6 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Muller '686* in view of *Muller et al.* (U.S. Patent No. 6,119,196 or *Muller '196*). The above rejections are respectfully traversed according to the remarks that follow.

The present invention is directed to, according to claim 1, a network switch stack configuration. The configuration includes a first network switch comprising a plurality of data ports, a first stacking port, and a first CPU interface, a second network switch

having a plurality of data ports, a second stacking port, and a second CPU interface and a common CPU connected to the first CPU interface and the second CPU interface. Additionally, the first stacking port and the second stacking port are communicatively connected, such that incoming packets on any of the plurality of data ports on the first and second switches can be effectively switched to any of the plurality of data ports on either of the first and second network switches and the first and second switches add module headers having module identifier fields to the incoming packets and the first and second stacking ports read the module headers to determine egress ports for the packets. Claims 2-6 are dependent upon claim 1.

Muller '686 is directed to a method and apparatus for providing hardware-assisted CPU access to a forwarding database. A switch fabric provides access to a forwarding database on behalf of a processor, and includes a memory access interface configured to arbitrate access to a forwarding database memory. The switch fabric includes interfaces for communicating with a CPU, shared memory, network ports and a cascading interface communicating with one or more switch elements.

Muller '196 is directed to a method and apparatus for managing a buffer memory in a packet switch that is shared between multiple ports in a network system. The apparatus comprises a plurality of slow data port interfaces configured to transmit data at a first data rate between a slow data port and the buffer memory and a plurality of fast data port interfaces configured to transmit data at a second data rate between a fast data port and the buffer memory. A first level arbiter is coupled to the plurality of slow data

port interfaces, where the first level arbiter chooses an access request of one the slow data ports and outputs the access request.

In the Advisory Action, the Office indicated that “the statement ‘module header’ recited in claim 1 is not indicate [sic] a difference with generic headers of the data packets.” Applicants continue to believe that there is no support for such a position. However, in order to timely prosecute the instant application, Applicants have adopted the changes to claim 1 discussed in the above-cited Interview. Thus, claim 1 recites, in part, “wherein the first and second switches add module headers having module identifier fields to the incoming packets.” Applicants respectfully assert that the above-cited prior art references fail to teach or suggest such a limitation.

The instant specification clearly describes the function and makeup of a module header, including module identifier fields, according to one embodiment of the present invention. Page 100, lines 29-32, discloses that “[t]he module header information, appended to the packet by the source, is received by IPIC 90 from the P channel. The module header includes the module ID bitmap, COS, mirrored-to port/switch information, trunk group ID, etc. The constructed packet is then sent onto the high performance interface 261.” A full description of composition of the module header is provided in the specification of the instant application at page 102, line 4 to page 103, line 29. Thus, Applicants respectfully assert that the recitation of module header, including module identifier fields, in claim 1 does not read on a generic header and that *Muller* ‘686 fails to teach or suggest such an element. For at least this reason, Applicants

respectfully assert that the anticipation rejection of claim 1 is improper and should be withdrawn.

Additionally, Applicants also respectfully traverse the Office's position that a header is inherently added to each incoming packet. While it could conceivably be asserted that *Muller '686* discloses the use of fields of the packet to determine an output port, *Muller '686* fails to teach or suggest *adding* a header to an *incoming* packet. While the rejection appears to allege that such a function would be "inherent," Applicants note that the use of inherent teachings in rejections is not so liberal. "Inherency, however may not be established by probabilities or possibilities. The mere fact that a certain thing *may* result from a given set of circumstances is not sufficient." Continental Can Co. USA Inc. v. Monsanto Co., 20 USPQ2d 1746, 1749 (Fed. Cir. 1991). As such, for this additional reason, Applicants respectfully assert that the anticipation rejection of claim 1 is improper and should be withdrawn.

Thus, Applicants respectfully assert that any rejection of claim 1 over *Muller '686* and/or *Muller '196* would be improper for failing to teach or suggest all of the elements of that claim. On the basis of the above, independent claim 1 is respectfully asserted to be patentable, and as a consequence the dependent claims 2-6 are patentable as well. It is therefore respectfully requested that claims 1-6 be allowed and this application be allowed to pass to issue.

If for any reason the Examiner determines that the application is not now in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact, by

telephone, the applicant's undersigned attorney at the indicated telephone number to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this application.

In the event this paper is not being timely filed, the applicant respectfully petitions for an appropriate extension of time. Any fees for such an extension together with any additional fees may be charged to Counsel's Deposit Account 50-2222.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin F. Turner", written over a horizontal line.

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